

The Status Report

December 2008 | Volume 5, Issue 6

Charles F. Hurley Building, 19 Staniford St., 6th Floor, Boston, MA 02114
Web: www.mass.gov/women Phone: 617-626-6520 E-Mail: mcsww@state.ma.us



MCSW Holds Public Hearing in Essex County



District Attorney John Blodgett presents testimony on the issue of domestic violence.

In keeping with its mandate to study and report on the status of women in the Commonwealth the MCSW held a regional public hearing on Wednesday, December 10 at the Torigian Community Life Center in Peabody attended by nearly 60 individuals.

The goal of the hearing was to gather information, opinions and insights about the issues confronting the women who live and work in Essex County communities. Commissioners heard testimony from 16 individuals representing various organizations and testifying on topics ranging from domestic violence to parent alienation.

District Attorney John Blodgett discussed the collaboration of the DA's office with the local police departments to work towards better tracking of perpetrators of domestic violence in an attempt to help in the persecution process. He also sought the Commission's support in advocating for the passage of Senate Bill S62, An Act Penalizing Domestic Abusers.

Barbara St. Pierre, Clinical Director for the Gloucester Child Abuse Prevention Partnership, revealed several startling statistics regarding child sexual abuse including that 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 6 boys are sexually abused. She noted that her organization is working to educate adults of the warning signs of sexual abuse and give them the tools to assist a child who has experienced abuse. St. Pierre seeks more funding for prevention and educational programs.

Representatives from the Girls Coalition and Pat Driscoll, Executive Director of Girls, Inc. in Lynn, spoke to different issues facing young girls in Essex County and their concerns regarding state budgets cuts and their effects on programs geared towards mentoring young women.

Elisabeth Wrenn, Assistant Director of the North Shore Rape Crisis Center, discussed the importance of having Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANE) available to victims of rape, citing that the prosecution rate is between 90-95% when a SANE does the post trauma exam.

Amanda DeJesus presented testimony regarding the issues surrounding family caregivers and sought the Commission's support for the passage of Senate Bill S2286, An Act Relating to Improving Quality in Early Education and Care by Family Child Care Providers.

During Fiscal Year 2009, the MCSW will hold Regional Public Hearings in the following areas: Framingham/Metrowest, Franklin/Hampden/Hampshire, Northern Middlesex, and Plymouth County. The MCSW is seeking organizations in these areas to assist with coordinating, hosting and spreading the word about these Dialogues. Interested parties should contact Outreach Coordinator Jill Ashton at jill.ashton@state.ma.us or 617-626-6525.

Inside This Issue

MCSW Hires New Executive Director	2
Commissions Across Commonwealth	3
MCSW Seeks Spring Interns	4
MA Conference for Women Recap	4
Upcoming Events	5

MCSW Names Kira Dunn New Executive Director

Kira Dunn, MPA began as the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women's Executive Director on December 1. MCSW Chairwoman Greer Swiston stated, "Kira Dunn is a life long activist with broad policy and program experience on the federal, state and local levels. She brings to the Commission the demonstrated administrative ability and organizational skills we were looking for to move the Commission forward in a positive direction. All Commissioners are looking forward to working with her."

Dunn previously worked under the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security. She served as the Director of Reentry and then as Director of Policy & Planning for the Massachusetts Parole Board. In that capacity, she worked to introduce transitional housing and human service programs designed to interrupt cycles of poverty including a program for women transitioning from prison back to the community.



Kira Dunn, Executive Director

Dunn has demonstrated success in increasing efficiencies in the public sector by designing systems to maximize resources and to engage stakeholders and policymakers. She was honored with a Congressional Certificate of Excellence for innovation and design. She has published several articles on increasing efficiencies in the delivery of government services. Ms. Dunn also brings experience with grant funding and management. She has developed and implemented multi-layered fundraising campaigns and initiatives and has written award-winning grants.

In addition to previous liaison work with federal and state legislators, community based networks and business groups, Ms. Dunn has also worked to assist municipal government operations. She was recruited to oversee budget operations and managed finances for the City of Somerville as the Director of Youth Department. She designed and developed a technical assistance program for municipal departments. She was awarded the City of Boston's Innovations Award and HUD's Best Practice Award. Ms. Dunn holds a Masters of Public Administration and is a graduate of Radcliffe College's Non Profit Leadership Program.

"It's an honor to have been selected," Dunn said. "The Commissioners have an ambitious agenda planned for the coming year and I am excited to be working with them to implement it."

Executive Director Dunn can be reached at kira.dunn@state.ma.us and 617-626-6520.

Speaker DiMasi Appoints and Reappoints for Two Commission Seats

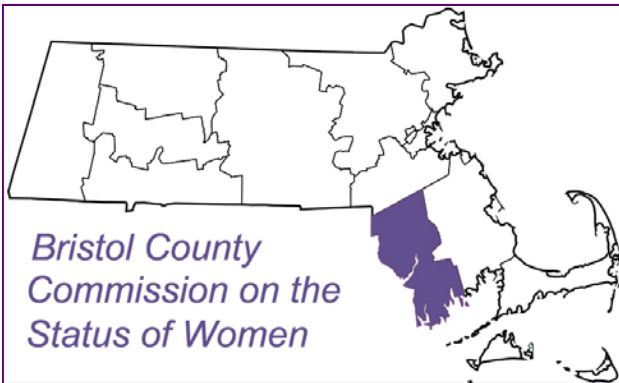
The MCSW is pleased to welcome **Stacy Dixon** as its newest Commissioner. Commissioner Dixon was recently appointed by Speaker of the House Salvatore F. DiMasi. In addition to her work as a Property Administrator for multiple buildings at one of Massachusetts' largest insurance firms, Commissioner Dixon is an ordained minister.

Commissioner Dixon is very active in the community and continues to volunteer in numerous organizations throughout the Commonwealth. She has also served on various School Site Councils as Vice President of their PTO. Along with her dedication to her family, she continues to be a role model and mentor to many young men and women in and out of her community. In 2008, Commissioner Dixon's volunteer work earned her recognition as one of the MCSW's Unsung Heroines.

One of the MCSW's founding Commissioners, **Donna Finneran**, was reappointed to the Commission by Speaker of the House Salvatore F. DiMasi. She is currently serving on the Commission's Executive Committee as the Secretary. Commissioner Finneran's social passions focus on women reentering school to earn academic degrees and improving the availability of shelters to women and children.

Commissioner Finneran is currently the co-owner of a small gift basket business called "Just Perfect!" and is also active in the community through her service at the Dorchester YMCA and on the Board of Visitors of the Women's Educational and Industrial Union. She is also a member of the Democratic State Committee and is involved in many local and neighborhood civic organizations.

Commission Corner: Checking in with Commissions Across the Commonwealth



Bristol County Commission on the Status of Women

The MCSW is the appointing authority to the Bristol County Commission on the Status of Women and continues to accept applications to fill commissioner positions for the newly established BCCSW. The MCSW encourages women living in Bristol County who are involved with and passionate about women's issues to apply.

Activists successfully argued that Bristol County was in need of a representative body to advise on and advocate for the rights and needs of the women of Southeastern Massachusetts. The BCCSW will seat nine Commissioners who will reflect the diversity of the region. Currently the cities and towns of North Attleboro,

Attleboro, Easton, Norton, Raynham, Dighton, Rehoboth, Seekonk, Acushnet and Westport are still without applicants. The application process will remain open until the MCSW has an adequate representation from all corners of the county.

Once appointed, Commissioners will be charged with reviewing the status of women in Bristol County and identifying potential solutions to the issues faced by this constituency. The BCCSW will annually report their findings concerning the status of the women in the county and offer an action platform and a legislative response.

To be considered for appointment, please submit a completed application package, which can be accessed at www.mass.gov/women, to: The Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women, ATTN: Bristol Commission Applications, Charles F. Hurley Building, 19 Staniford Street, 6th Floor, Boston, MA, 02114. Applications and additional information are available at www.mass.gov/women. Please remember that information you provide is public and cannot be kept private or confidential.

Cape Cod & Islands Commission on the Status of Women

With only a few days left in the Massachusetts Legislature's session the MCSW is working diligently to ensure passage for **SD2727, An Act Establishing the Cape Cod and Islands Commission on the Status of Women**. Consisting of 13 persons living in Barnstable, Dukes and Nantucket Counties, the CC&I Commission will serve to give voice to the challenges and concerns of women and their families in this region of the Commonwealth. The Cape Cod and Islands Commission will be charged with conducting an ongoing study of all matters concerning women in Barnstable, Dukes and Nantucket Counties and advising local and state officials on their findings and recommended solutions.

The bill has been passed by the Senate; however it is currently stalled in the House Ways and Means Committee. If this bill does not pass in the last few days of this year it will need to be re-filed and the women of the Cape and Islands will have to wait for months for the bill to move through the legislative process.

We are asking constituents to call their representative and ask them to contact their colleagues in House Ways and Means and urge them to report the bill out favorably. For assistance finding representative contact information or for additional information, please contact Outreach Coordinator Jill Ashton at 617-626-6525 or jill.ashton@state.ma.us.

MCSW Legislative Update

The Commission is excited to report that **H4718, An Act Relative to Caregiver Medical and Educational Consent** was passed by the legislature and is on its way to the Governor's Desk. This legislation, sponsored by Representative Leper will allow parents to authorize a caregiver, such as a grandparent or kinship care provider, to consent to medical treatment and educational decisions on behalf of the child that is in their care. The Act would not divest the parent or parents of any guardianship rights, but would give caregivers concurrent authority with the parent or parents.

The Commission has supported this legislation since the beginning of the legislative session two years ago and was spurned to do so because of the testimony provided by a grandparent at an MCSW public hearing.

MCSW Seeks Winter and Spring Interns

The Commission has begun accepting applications for spring interns. The MCSW welcomes college students to intern for course credits. Each intern brings their talent, skills and enthusiasm to the MCSW to help assist staff in accomplishing a long list of projects. The diverse perspective of each intern continuously enriches the work of the Commission.

Please contact our office to discuss any of the following opportunities:

Legislative responsibilities may include:

- Researching and monitoring state and national legislation that affects women
- Outreach to other organizations or groups involved with issues of concern to women
- Supporting activities of the Commission's Legislative Committee

Research responsibilities may include:

- Researching information regarding the status of women in Massachusetts
- Coordinating the activities of the Massachusetts Women's Research Collaborative

Communications/Publications responsibilities may include:

- Writing & distributing press releases and media advisories, updating and/or creating media lists, and obtaining media coverage
- Assisting with the Commission's monthly newsletter and Web site
- Updating the Commission's printed materials.

MA Women's Resource and Referral Network responsibilities may include:

- Updating the Commission's statewide resources and corresponding databases
- Outreach to organizations to build the referral database and to establish ongoing lines of communication and relationships

Fundraising responsibilities may include:

- Researching potential alternative sources of funding and drafting proposals
- Grant writing
- Special events planning and implementation

Outreach/Advocacy responsibilities may include:

- Assisting with the coordination of public hearings and regional councils
- Supporting activities of the Outreach and Advocacy Committee

General responsibilities include:

- Supporting Commissioners and staff on ongoing projects and events
- Assisting staff with the day-to-day operations of the Commission office

Please note that all internships require a commitment of at least 16 hours a week.

For consideration, please submit a cover lettering indicating which intern position you are applying for and why you think your experience would be a good fit for the position. Please include your computer experience and areas of academic and personal interest, and forward your cover letter and resume to: Jill Ashton, Outreach Coordinator, Jill.Ashton@state.ma.us.

MCSW Participates in MA Conference for Women



On Thursday, December 11th the MCSW participated as an exhibitor at the MA Conference for Women, drawing over 5,000 participants from across the Commonwealth and beyond. As a result the MCSW was able to network and disseminate information about its mission and upcoming events.

Commissioner Angela Menino served as a speaker prior to the afternoon keynote address delivered by the women of WOWoWOW.com and Commissioner Ruth Bramson provided her expertise as a panelist in two of the Conferences educational sessions.

Take Action. Get Educated. Get Involved.

If you are interested in becoming more involved in the movement to advance women in the Commonwealth you can start by attending any one of the number of events and meetings taking place across the state in the coming weeks.

Saturday, January 3 (7 p.m.): 8th Annual Haitian Independence Day Gala

Location: Lombardo's Restaurant (6 Billings Street, Randolph)

Details: The gala is a celebration of Haitian culture sponsored by the Haitian-Americans United, Inc of Boston. The Haitian unity will be celebrated, commemorated and promoted throughout the evening. Entertainment will be provided by Boston Haitian artists. State representatives from MA and NH will among the honorary guests. Two Haitian champions will be recognized during the evening. Registration is required in advance for more information to reserve your seat, please contact H.A.U 617-298-2976 or e-mail unity@hauinc.org

Tuesday, January 6 (7:00 p.m.): Feminism & Dessert: Women and Political Leadership

Location: Center for new words (7 Temple Street, Cambridge)

Details: Share your thoughts about Women and Political Leadership in preparation for the inaugural, with swell people and sweet dessert. The Feminism & Dessert is a monthly series of engagingly informal talks about subjects that impact our daily lives. Feel free to bring your dinner. The Center for New Words mission is to use the power of words and creativity to strengthen the voice of progressive and marginalized women in the society.

Saturday, February 14 (11:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.): Purses & Pearls, A Classic English Afternoon

Location: The Four Seasons Hotel (200 Boylston Street, Boston)

Details: Participate in a multigenerational afternoon tea to benefit the Starlight Children's Foundation. Parents and children have the opportunity to spend quality time together teaching volunteerism to a younger generation. Guests will enjoy an afternoon tea and special performances. There will be an opportunity to shop from a selection of goods by local artists and a silent auction of celebrity handbags. In addition, children will be acknowledged as Boston's youngest philanthropists. Starlight Foundation is dedicated to helping seriously ill children and their families cope with their pain, fear and isolation through entertainment, education and family activities. For more information please contact Jonelle at 617-241-9911 or visit www.starlight.org/newengland.

**Friday, March 6 (7:30 a.m. to 9:30 a.m.): International Women's Day Breakfast - Who Owns Your Food & Water: Globally & Locally**

Location: Linda K. Paresky Conference Center, Simmons College (300 The Fenway, Boston)

Details: This year, the Boston International Women's Day Breakfast will examine the impact that corporate ownership of food and water has had on women, their families and their communities – locally and globally. Join us for an engaging and informative morning of presenters as they address the concerns, challenges and effects that corporate ownership of food and water have on the health of women, their families and their communities. For more information please contact Diane Hammer at diane.hammer@simmons.edu.

**Friday, March 20 (7:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.): Massachusetts Health Council Women's Health Forum - Getting Healthy, Staying Healthy: Knowledge is Everything**

Location: Marriott Copley Place (110 Huntington Avenue, Boston)

Details: This educational experience is designed to improve the health of the attendees, their friends, families and associates and give women a starting point in leading healthier, happier, more productive lives. Women from all walks of life should attend to gain an insight on taking better care of themselves; from reducing stress in one's everyday life to preventing some of the most common and serious illnesses that effect women. Take this time to put yourself first and gain valuable information to keep you healthy in mind, body, and spirit. Tickets are \$85 for MCH members and \$95 for non-members. For more information please visit www.mahealthcouncil.org.

Do you have an event you would like to see on this list in an upcoming issue of The Status Report? E-mail the details to Program Coordinator Kim Sebastiao at Kimberly.Sebastiao@state.ma.us and we will do our best to include your event in our next issue.

Commission Officers & Members

Greer Tan Swiston, Chair, Newton
Pam Malumphy, Vice Chair, Pittsfield
Elizabeth H. Houlihan, Treasurer, Falmouth
Donna Finneran, Secretary, Mattapan

Ruth Bramson, Dover
Linda Cavaoli, Worcester
Helen Corbett, Middleton
Deborah DiMasi, Boston
Stacy Dixon, Randolph
Erika Ebbel, Cambridge
Marianne Fleckner, Westford
Catherine Greene, Esq., Brighton
Helen Jackson, MD, W. Roxbury
Angela Menino, Hyde Park
Madhu Sridhar, Andover

Commission Staff

Kira Dunn, Executive Director
Jill Ashton, Outreach Coordinator
Kim Sebastiao, Program Coordinator
Darlene Kelter, Administrative Assistant

Commission Interns

Erta Kokalari, *Bunker Hill Community College*
Eglantina Malaj, *Salem State College*



19 Staniford St., 6th FL
Boston, MA 02114

Phone:

617.626.6520

Fax:

617.626.6530

E-Mail:

mcsw@state.ma.us

Web site:

www.mass.gov/women

**Do you have questions or comments about this
newsletter? If so, please contact**

MCSW@state.ma.us

Member of the



Wishing You a Happy and Healthy Holiday Season!



Warmest Regards,

The Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women

